

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AGR-05 EB-07 PA-01 PRS-01 SSO-00 SAM-01

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O R 061513Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3029

INFO USIA WASHDC

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OTRA, UR, EAGR

SUBJECT: PRESS CONTACT WITH SPRING WHEAT TEAM

STATE PASS USDA

REF: (A) MOSCOW 10535 (B) STATE 185298

1. EMBASSY URGENTLY REQUESTS RECONSIDERATION OF DECISION CONVEYED
REF B ON BASIS FOLLOWING CONSIDERATIONS:

(A) EARLIER ESTABLISHED PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING
INFORMATION DEVELOPED BY PREVIOUS WHEAT TEAMS ARE
AT CORE OF US CORRESPONDENTS COMPLAINT. THEY FEEL
BYPASSED AND WILL NOT BE SATISFIED WITH USDA PRESS
RELEASE IN WASHINGTON. CORRESPONDENTS BELIEVE STRONGLY
FIRST PRESS REPORTS SHOULD HAVE MOSCOE DATE-LINE.

(B) EMBASSY WISHES REITERATE THAT PRESS MEETING ON
INFORMAL AND BACKGROUND BASIS WITH TEAM SPOKESMAN
IN MOSCOW WOULD NOT RESULT IN COVERAE OF QUOTE
TEAM'S FINDINGS UNQUOTE, BUT SIPLY ON SUCH MATTERS
AS RECEPTION BY SOVIETS AND SOME OBSERVATIONS ON
SOME AREAS VISITED (AS SUGGESTED PARA 3, REFTEL B).

(C) EMBASSY IS CONVINCED THAT MEETING CAN BE HELD
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WITHOUT IN ANY WAY PREJUDICING WHATEVER FUTURE ASSESS-

MENT OR ANNOUNCEMENT TO BE MADE BY USDA. TO AVOID BEING DRAWN INTO ANY OVERALL ASSESSMENT, TEAM SPOKESMAN COULD POINT OUT THAT INFORMATION GATHERED REPRESENTS SMALL PART OF PICTURE AND MUST BE STUDIED AND ANALYZED IN LIGHT OF INFO AVAILABLE FROM OTHER SOURCES BEFORE ANY CONCLUSIONS CAN BE DRAWN (AS PER PARA 2, REFTEL B).

(D) HOWEVER, EMBASSY DOES NOT BELIEVE BRIEFING BY AMBASSADOR, MINISTER-COUNSELOR, OR AG ATTACHE WITHOUT TEAM MEMBER PRESENT WILL SATISFY CORRESPONDENTS. WE SEE NO REASON WHY TEAM SPOKESMAN, ACCOMPANIED BY AMBASSADOR AND AG ATTACHE, COULD NOT MEET PRESS ON BACKGROUND BASIS AS OUTLINED IN PARA 3 REFTEL. THIS COULD EASILY BE ARRANGED BY HAVING TEAM MEMBER PRESENT AT REGULARLY SCHEDULED BACKGROUND PRESS BRIEFING AMBASSADOR HOLDS WITH US CORRESPONDENTS EVERY FRIDAY AT 1600.

(E) EMBASSY DOES NOT SEE PROBLEM AS ONE OF ITS RELATIONS WITH MOSCOW-BASED U.S. CORRESPONDENTS, BUT AS ONE ADMINISTRATION'S RELATIONS WITH US PRESS. WE CONSIDER TEAM MEETING WITH CORRESPONDENTS NECESSARY TO HEAD OFF SERIES OF EXTREMELY ADVERSE ARTICLES, POSSIBLY CHARGING ADMINISTRATION COVER-UP. WITH MOSCOW DATELINE, AND CONSIDERING CURRENT INTEREST IN GRAIN SALES, SUCH STORIES LIKELY TO RECEIVE PROMINENT PLACEMENT. WE HAVE CONCRETE INDICATIONS THAT CORRESPONDENTS FOR NEW YORK TIMES, CHICAGO TRIBUNE, CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR, AND UPI WILL FILE SUCH STORIES IF THEY FAIL TO HAVE SOME CONTACT WITH A SPOKESMAN FOR THE TEAM.

(F) FINALLY, WE DO NOT SEE MEETING WITH PRESS PREJUDICING FUTURE EXCHANGES SINCE TEAM SPOKESMAN WILL PRESUMABLY NOT BE MAKING STATEMENTS UNFAVORABLE TO SOVIETS OR DIVULGING INFORMATION GIVEN US IN CONFIDENCE.

(G) FYI: DESIGNATION OF JOURNALIST AS QUOTE OPERATING MEMBER OF TEAM UNQUOTE IS NOT CONSIDERED VALID POINT BY RESIDENT CORRESPONDENTS.

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2. WISH REITERATE WE ARE CONVINCED TEAM SPOKESMAN CAN MEET WITH PRESS AND PROVIDE ENOUGH BACKGROUND INFO FOR STORIES WITHOUT PREJUDICING FUTURE PRESS HANDLING OF THIS MATTER.
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